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KIANG WEN-HAN ON CHURCH AND STATE

The August 1957 number of the Nanking Seminary Magazine, a theological magazine published in Nanking and subscribed to by Christian pastors all over China, contains an article on the subject of "Church and State", written by Kiang Wen-han, one of the General Secretaries of the National Committee of the YMCA of China. It is an apologetic article, the purpose of which can be seen from these lines in the introductory paragraph: "Western Christians think that although we in China have freedom of religious belief, still we have compromised with the government, and thus the freedom which we have received is not complete. Is this attitude correct? Let us see." This statement of purpose confirms the insight of Prof. Walter Freytag in his article in the October number of the International Missionary Review, that the Chinese Church, like the German Church under the Nazis, is deeply concerned to demonstrate to the rest of the world that it has not compromised its Christian faith.

The main body of the article is divided into three sections: 1. The Point of View of Western Christians; 2. The Recognition by Chinese Christians of New China; and 3. The Biblical View.

1. In the first section he begins with a brief review of the history of church and state relations in the West, from the Emperor Constantine down. On coming to the present he concludes that there is no real distinction between national and free churches, as we see them in Europe and America, for in spite of the formal separation of church and state in some countries, "actually the church is at the service of capitalism, and so what we see is merely a convenient division of labor between church and state."

He goes on to refer with evident approval to the struggle of Western Christians against totalitarian forms of government, objecting only to the fact that they "indiscriminately include the Soviet Union along with Germany and Italy," and indeed date the beginning of modern totalitarianism from the October Revolution in 1917. "They were not able to deny the economic achievements of the socialist nations, but they maintained that totalitarianism meant the end of human freedom, that the abolition of private property put men in slavery to their governments, because private property is the necessary condition of human freedom. They admitted that private property created classes in society, but they maintained that arbitrary government also created its own new class system.

This section concludes with an approving reference to the fundamental theological questions which Western Christians have raised. First, what is the basis of governmental authority? On this he quotes with commendation the position of Niebuhr on whether a government is divine or demonic. "When a government tries to encompass all of human life, making itself into God,

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it is then demonic." Secondly, where is the Christian's ultimate loyalty? In discussing this question he recognizes the possibility of an unavoidable conflict. Thirdly, what is the proper relationship of might, right and love? Here he points out the paradox involved in the fact that love constrains a Christian to take part in the collective life of the State, but that the might of a State inevitably produces corruption, which destroys right, and thus nullifies the purposes of loving action. Finally, what is the relation between God's creative work and His redemptive work? If they are related, then the State, which is a part of God's creation, must also have its role to play in man's redemption.

2. In the second section he reiterates what is now the conventional view in China, that the missionaries were made use of by imperialism, with the result that until the coming of Communism, the Christian Church in China was either consciously or unconsciously subservient to reactionary government. Since then the situation has changed. "Chinese Christians have come to recognize that the People's Government under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party is sincere in its policy of freedom of religious belief, and is willing to help the Church in any difficulties it may meet. "Since both the standard of living and the level of public morals have been steadily rising, we feel that there are improved conditions for proclaiming the Gospel in New China, and that therefore to participate in the Government is one way to bear witness for the Lord....Although we and the Communists differ in faith, we are all Chinese, and are one in our desire for the increasing prosperity and glory of our country. This difference in belief is therefore no hindrance to intimate cooperation in the building up of our country."

Here he takes note more specifically of Western concern over this cooperation. The West fears that "in loving our country we will cease to love God. This fear is groundless." The fervid patriotism of the Chinese Christian Church today, he says, is due partly to a reaction from the colonial, non-Chinese status of the Church in missionary days, and partly to a recognition that the country under the leadership of the Communist Party is something deserving of love. "We do not oppose the People's Government, because a government which serves the people ought not to be opposed. We admit that it would be a compromise of Christian principles were we to be complacent towards a government which was aggressive abroad and oppressive at home, but it is not such a compromise when we support a government that is truly peaceful and conciliatory abroad, and earnest in its attack on poverty and exploitation at home."

In fact, he says, Western concern at this point is only an expression of Western prejudice. "Western Christians have a deep prejudice against anyone who supports Communism, and consider that such a person cannot be a true Christian. Is not this surprising? Can Christianity only survive in a capitalistic society?"

3. The last section is on the Biblical View. He notes that the Bible is not very explicit on the question of the relation of Church and State, but still it is possible to infer a Christian attitude from the teaching of Christ and the apostles. Although Christ recognized that in general His kingdom was not of this world, still He loved his own country and wept over it, and was concerned enough to enunciate a deep truth in His "Render unto Caesar" saying. "It teaches that though there are some things which do indeed belong to Caesar, still Caesar is not everything, and Caesar is not God." Paul in general had a favorable attitude toward the government, but Peter could boldly say, "We must obey God rather than men," and the Book of Revelation describes Rome as "drunk with the blood of the saints and the witnesses of Jesus."

From all of this he draws the conclusion: "The attitude of the Church towards the State depends upon the nature of the government concerned....We must obey a government that serves the people and resist one that does not. And in each case what we do is a witness for the Lord." And according to his experience, the People's Government has the proper qualifications, because it both serves the people and guarantees freedom of religious belief. "We are faithful to the God revealed by Christ, and do not feel any inconsistency between this and our love for our country. Our church has now established its own independence, and is therefore in a position to enter into fuller relations with the churches in other countries. We believe that there is a bright future for the church in New China, because we are convinced that that future is in the hands of Almighty God."

So ends this noteworthy statement. Kiang's appeal to fact and experience may seem ra

shaky to one who knows about the denunciation movement into which the Government forced the Church in China, and the many unwarranted arrests and imprisonments in his vaunted "New China", but I have no doubt that he is sincere in his belief that in the main the history of the past eight years bears out his position.

At the same time it is to be noted that he by indirection points out to the Communists the conditions under which Christians would feel obliged to oppose the People's Government. It is as though he were saying, "As long as you uphold religious freedom and really serve the people, we shall feel it our Christian duty to support you, but if you swerve from this policy we shall be obliged, like the early Christians, to adopt a policy of uncompromising opposition."

There is throughout a sense of respect for Western thinking and a conscious attempt to build upon it that seems to indicate a return to normal attitudes and a recovery from the blind opposition to everything Western that has been so common in China during the past eight years. With this is probably to be connected the note at the end, that the establishment of the independence of the Chinese Church now makes it possible for her to enter upon fuller relations with the churches in other countries.

But however we evaluate Kiang's reasoning, it is evident that there is independent thinking going on in the Chinese Christian Church today.

CHINESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG

Dr. Elfan Rees, European representative of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, a joint agency of the World Council and the International Missionary Council, said in Geneva recently that the World Council intends to intensify its efforts on behalf of the 750,000 Chinese refugees in Hong Kong. Other pledges of assistance were made by spokesmen for the International Conference of Catholic Charities and the International Catholic Migration Committee. This was in response to an appeal by UN High Commissioner for Refugees Auguste R. Lindt, who has, in accordance with a UN General Assembly resolution, called for the help of private organizations to assist the UN in meeting this problem.

THE NEW ALPHABET

The State Council on December 11 issued a new revised draft of the Latin alphabet for the Chinese language. It now consists of the 26 letters of our alphabet, without any non-Latin letters. Four combinations of letters are used: zh, ch, sh, and ng. Wade's apostrophes are dropped, and instead b, d, and g are used along with p, t, and k. Other changes from Wade are: ts into c, ts' into s, ss into z, ch into j, ch' into q, hs into x, j into r. Tone marks are the same as in Wade.

It is expected that the alphabet will be officially adopted by the National People's Congress which was scheduled to meet on January 25. In the meantime Premier Chou En-lai issued on January 10 a strong statement supporting the use of an alphabet. He pointed out that the first attempt at an alphabet was made by Marco Polo in 1605, and that many schemes had been put forward since then. The Government has studied them all and come to the conclusion that the alphabet as outlined above best suits the purpose. "The Government has moved in this matter with a great sense of responsibility and with discretion," he said. He evidently had no doubt that it would be approved by the Congress for he adds, "I hope that after endorsement by the National People's Congress the alphabet will immediately be used to annotate textbooks used in elementary school language courses and literacy readers for speakers of northern dialects."

There is as yet no suggestion that the alphabet will replace the old Chinese characters. A linguistic expert Lu Shu-hsiung outlined six uses for the alphabet, and Chou En-lai confirms this statement as the extent to which the alphabet will be used: 1. To annotate Chinese characters. 2. To popularize and standardize the Peking pronunciation. 3. To form a basis for minority languages. 4. To regularize the translation of proper names and technical terms. 5. To facilitate lexicography and indexing. 6. To replace the present cumbersome four figure code system in telegraphy.

As to replacing the characters, Chou En-lai admits that there is still no agreement, and